



GENDER4POWER



The citizens' fight against energy poverty

The role of energy communities and other citizen initiatives

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1. Introduction

Energy poverty continues to be one of the most pressing social and environmental challenges in Europe, affecting millions of households that struggle to afford adequate heating, cooling, and electricity services. The phenomenon is not only linked to income disparities or inefficient housing but also to structural inequalities that shape access to energy and participation in decision-making processes. Gender, age, and socio-economic status intersect to determine who benefits from the energy transition and who remains excluded. Women, single-parent families, elderly people, and low-income tenants are often disproportionately affected, making a gender-sensitive approach indispensable to any analysis or policy response.

This report explores how citizens and local communities are taking action to confront energy poverty through innovative and participatory solutions. It focuses on the growing role of energy communities and other citizen-led initiatives across six European contexts —Austria, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain—examining how they contribute to reducing energy vulnerability while fostering empowerment, solidarity, and gender equality. Energy communities represent a promising model for democratizing the energy system, enabling collective self-consumption, and redistributing economic and social benefits at the local level. However, their potential depends on adequate policy support, inclusive design, and the active participation of all social groups.

The methodology of this report combines a comparative qualitative approach and desk-based research. Information was gathered from national reports, policy documents, academic literature, and case studies developed within the GENDER4POWER framework. Each country analysis identifies key measures to tackle energy poverty, the level of maturity of energy communities, and the extent to which gender and social inclusion are integrated into their practices. The synthesis draws cross-country comparisons to highlight common challenges and best practices, focusing particularly on inclusiveness, access to energy, rehabilitation and efficiency measures, and capacity-building initiatives.

By linking social innovation, gender equality, and citizen participation, this report aims to provide evidence-based insights and recommendations to policymakers, municipalities, and civil society organizations. Ultimately, it seeks to demonstrate that an inclusive energy transition—where vulnerable households are not only beneficiaries but active agents—constitutes a fundamental step toward a fair and sustainable Europe.

Note on gender and data: Throughout this report we mostly use the categories “women” and “men” because official national/EU datasets and indicators record gender in a binary way. We recognize that the experiences of trans, non-binary, and intersex people - and intersectional factors (income, age, parenthood, migration, disability) -are under-documented in available quantitative data. We advocate for more inclusive measurement under robust privacy/GDPR and safety



safeguards. References to “women” and “men” reflect data limitations, not a binary view of gender.

2. Energy poverty and the measures to tackle it

Energy poverty remains a critical issue across Europe, disproportionately affecting low-income households, single-parent families, older adults, and women, who frequently face compounded vulnerabilities due to digital exclusion, limited financial resources, and underrepresentation in decision-making processes. Recent trends indicate a notable increase in energy poverty risk in several countries, exacerbated by rising energy prices and geopolitical crises, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which particularly impacted Germany and Lithuania.

National responses vary, encompassing financial support, energy efficiency programmes, and regulatory measures. Austria implements initiatives such as Sauber Heizen für Alle and Sanieren für Alle, targeting heating system replacement and housing renovations for vulnerable households, complemented by social energy advice services. Germany introduced emergency measures including the Energiepreisbremse price cap and lump-sum allowances for vulnerable groups, although a comprehensive legal definition of energy poverty is lacking. Greece relies on the National Action Plan for Combating Energy Poverty and composite indicators combining income, energy expenditure, and housing conditions, yet most policies remain gender-blind. Lithuania focuses on financial compensation, energy efficiency investments, and the establishment of citizen and renewable energy communities (CECs and RECs) to promote local energy benefits. Slovenia’s framework combines national targets to reduce energy-poor households, targeted renovation subsidies, and preparatory measures to include vulnerable populations in energy communities. Spain has formalized energy poverty definitions through its National Strategy against Energy Poverty and provides social electricity and heating subsidies, alongside consumer protections.

Energy communities and citizen-led initiatives are emerging as pivotal mechanisms to address energy poverty, fostering collective self-consumption, democratic governance, and local empowerment. While Austria, Germany, Greece, and Lithuania have established varying degrees of legal recognition and operational models for citizen energy participation, challenges persist, including financial barriers, limited technical capacity, bureaucratic complexity, and underrepresentation of women and other vulnerable groups. Initiatives such as solidarity tariffs, pooled energy allocation, and gender-sensitive participation strategies, exemplified in Greece, Spain and Slovenia, illustrate the potential of people-centred approaches to enhance inclusion and social equity. Across all countries, effective integration of energy-poor households into energy communities remains contingent upon supportive policy frameworks, inclusive design, and targeted outreach.



3. Energy communities facing energy poverty

Energy communities (ECs) are increasingly recognized as innovative tools to address energy poverty across Europe. Their potential lies in enabling local, citizen-driven energy production and redistribution, while fostering social inclusion, democratic participation, and citizen empowerment. Across the six countries studied — Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain, Germany, and Austria — ECs vary in maturity, scope, and effectiveness, but common patterns emerge regarding inclusiveness, access to energy, rehabilitation efforts, and training initiatives.

3.1. Inclusiveness and participation measures

3.1.1. Reaching vulnerable populations

ECs consistently face challenges in including energy-poor households. Greece and Lithuania demonstrate both emerging initiatives and persistent barriers: in Greece, only a minority of communities directly target vulnerable households, often requiring broader community support or municipal collaboration. Hyperion Energy Community and Minoan Energy Community are notable exceptions, providing free electricity to low-income families. Similarly, in Lithuania, municipal ECs such as Šiauliai provide structured support to energy-poor residents, while citizen-led initiatives like CEC Vytis have yet to implement social inclusion measures.

Spain offers advanced examples, particularly through collaborations with Energy Advice Points (PAEs) and local councils, which help identify vulnerable households while ensuring anonymity and equality among EC members. In rural areas, personal trust networks facilitate inclusion, while urban ECs rely on formal institutional partnerships. Fractionated payment schemes or solidarity funds are used to enable participation without stigma or financial barriers.

In Slovenia, ECs are generally in a formative stage, with limited engagement of energy-poor households. Existing projects often focus on environmentally conscious or middle-income citizens, leaving vulnerable groups underrepresented. Similar challenges are observed in Germany and Austria, where ECs are often technically advanced but social inclusion strategies are less formalized, although some regional initiatives provide direct support to disadvantaged households.

3.1.2. Gender representation and participation

Gender imbalance is a pervasive challenge. Across Greece, Lithuania, and Slovenia, women are underrepresented in decision-making roles, with male-dominated boards limiting gender-sensitive approaches. For example, in Greece, 42% of EC boards have no women, and in Slovenia, elderly women affected by energy poverty remain largely absent from participation. Spain presents a contrasting dynamic: while formal governance often remains male-dominated,



active participation in meetings and project activities is frequently higher among women, especially in tasks related to energy-poverty initiatives. Germany and Austria show similar trends, with strong technical leadership often male-dominated, yet women playing key roles in local engagement and social aspects of EC operations.

Increasing women's involvement requires trust-building, flexible meeting schedules, technical training, and recognition of diverse motivations — financial versus community-oriented. Some ECs, like WEnCoop in Greece or targeted training programs in Spain, explicitly focus on inclusive or women-led structures, suggesting scalable best practices.

3.1.3. Participation models for vulnerable households

Participation of energy-poor households often remains passive, with most receiving free electricity or other support but not participating in governance. Exceptions include structured programs in Lithuania and Spain, where municipalities or social services help formalize membership and ensure parity in decision-making. Mechanisms such as anonymity, solidarity funds, and customized participation packages help maintain equality while addressing vulnerability. However, many ECs, particularly in Slovenia, Germany, and Austria, lack formalized approaches, limiting empowerment and co-creation for marginalized populations.

3.2. Access to energy

3.2.1. Energy distribution models

Energy access mechanisms vary according to EC structure and regulatory environment. The virtual net-metering model is widely used in Greece and Lithuania, allowing each participant, including vulnerable households, to offset consumption proportionally to allocated shares. Spain employs shared self-consumption schemes, often with 10% of energy explicitly reserved for vulnerable users, facilitated by solidarity funds or municipal subsidies.

In Slovenia, while ECs like the Ljubljana condominium project distribute energy according to consumption, surplus energy redistribution beyond the community perimeter is currently impossible. Germany and Austria show high levels of technical sophistication, yet targeted access for vulnerable households is limited unless municipal or cooperative frameworks intervene directly.

3.2.2. Anonymity and equal conditions

Across countries, protecting the anonymity of vulnerable participants is crucial. Spanish ECs employ internal commissions to manage data and ensure that support mechanisms do not stigmatize beneficiaries. In Greece and Lithuania, municipal ECs directly provide free energy to low-income households, while citizen-led





initiatives often require broader community subsidies to cover costs. Maintaining equality among members, regardless of contributions or aid received, is a recurring design principle.

3.3. Rehabilitation and energy efficiency

3.3.1. Housing renovation and energy efficiency interventions

Implementation of housing rehabilitation and energy efficiency measures varies significantly.

- Greece: Limited examples, such as Minoan Energy Community, which offers advisory services for energy-saving measures.
- Lithuania: Municipal ECs indirectly support energy efficiency by reducing household electricity costs but have not directly undertaken housing upgrades.
- Slovenia: Programs like ZER2024 offer full financing for vulnerable households but often fail to reach those most in need. Projects under the Infinite H2020 framework demonstrate effective deep renovations for social housing, including solar PV installations.
- Spain: ECs actively explore rehabilitation measures, often through pilot collaborations with housing cooperatives (e.g., La Diversa in Barcelona). Obstacles include funding recognition, high budgets, and regulatory barriers.
- Germany & Austria: ECs have high technical capabilities, yet housing interventions are limited and usually require integration with social or municipal programs.

3.3.2. Soft measures and facilitation

When direct renovation is impractical, ECs implement “soft” measures: small audits, low-cost efficiency kits, or sensitization campaigns. Some Spanish ECs partner with organizations like the Red Cross to extend advisory services to vulnerable households. These initiatives enhance comfort, reduce energy use, and prepare households for future efficiency upgrades.

3.4. Citizen empowerment and training

3.4.1. Capacity-building activities

Training and awareness-raising are central to EC missions across all countries.



- **Technical training:** Greece, Spain, and Slovenia provide workshops on solar PV, energy efficiency, and electricity market basics. Programs often target members, neighbours, schools, or specific social groups.
- **Inclusive education:** Spain stands out for offering participatory and contextualized trainings, including cooking with solar ovens, electricity-bill literacy, and cooperativism workshops for women experiencing gender violence.
- **Feminist and socially-aware approaches:** Slovenia and Spain emphasize the need for programs linking energy justice with housing rights, care work, and public services, using visual tools, storytelling, and assembly-based learning.
- **Municipal capacity-building:** Lithuania and Germany show strong institutional engagement, preparing staff and residents to manage renewable installations, though social and gender-specific training is less formalized.

3.4.2. Participation in governance and decision-making

Training programs also empower members to participate meaningfully in governance. Examples include Spain, where new EC members must complete mandatory modules on energy use and market operations, and Slovenia, where organized residents manage condominium solar projects. Greece highlights informal empowerment, where energy-poor beneficiaries typically remain passive, underlining the need for formal inclusion strategies.

4. Main barriers faced by energy communities fighting energy poverty

Energy communities (ECs) are increasingly recognized as key actors in mitigating energy poverty by fostering local renewable energy production, promoting shared self-consumption, and strengthening citizen participation. Despite their transformative potential, ECs across Austria, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Spain face a complex and interrelated set of barriers that limit their capacity to effectively reach and support vulnerable households. These obstacles span financial, social, regulatory, technical, and gender dimensions, and they often intersect, amplifying the challenges for both communities and beneficiaries.



4.1. Financial constraints

Financial barriers remain among the most persistent obstacles. Many households experiencing energy poverty —such as low-income tenants, single parents, elderly pensioners, or families with high-energy needs— lack the resources to invest in renewable technologies or join community schemes requiring upfront contributions.

Even when subsidies or support programmes exist, bureaucratic complexity, strict eligibility criteria, and low awareness often prevent access by the most vulnerable.

Energy communities themselves face financial hurdles: small-scale projects may lack sufficient capital to cover start-up costs, expand capacity, or develop mechanisms that ensure the participation of disadvantaged groups. Some communities have resorted to solidarity funds, fractionated payment models, or collaboration with social services to alleviate these issues, yet access remains uneven across contexts.

4.2. Administrative and regulatory challenges

Complex administrative procedures and fragmented governance are a major bottleneck. Lengthy permitting processes, unclear legal definitions of energy poverty, and overlapping responsibilities between national, regional, and municipal authorities create delays and uncertainty.

In particular, shared self-consumption and energy-sharing models still lack a clear legal framework in countries such as Germany, Greece, and Slovenia, limiting the ability of ECs to distribute renewable energy to households in need.

In urban settings, navigating multiple bureaucracies can be slow and discouraging; in rural areas, implementation may rely heavily on personal networks and individual initiative. Additional challenges include heritage building restrictions, rooftop ownership disputes, and cooperative law constraints, all of which can undermine the social impact and financial viability of EC projects.

4.3. Structural and contextual barriers

The physical and social context of housing plays a decisive role. Poor insulation, fragmented property ownership, and a high share of rental housing restrict the effectiveness of renewable energy projects to alleviate energy poverty.

Households with higher energy needs —families with children, elderly persons, or people with disabilities— are disproportionately affected.



Moreover, the “invisibility” of vulnerable groups to EC initiatives, combined with limited municipal support and complex decision-making in multi-apartment buildings, reduces participation. Digital and technical literacy gaps, particularly among older adults, further exclude these groups from smart metering, demand response, or self-consumption programs.

4.4. Social and cultural barriers

Social acceptance and participation are often hindered by lack of trust, stigma, and limited time availability among vulnerable groups. Many perceive ECs as overly technical, elitist, or disconnected from their realities.

Successful engagement requires anonymity safeguards, tailored outreach, and culturally sensitive participation models, as shown in inclusive Spanish ECs.

Gender dynamics deepen these challenges: women remain underrepresented in leadership, face time constraints due to caregiving, and encounter lower technical confidence. A male-dominated energy culture, few female role models, and lack of gender-disaggregated data perpetuate exclusion, while elderly women, single mothers, and female-headed households are particularly vulnerable.

4.5. Technical and organisational limitations

High upfront investment requirements for renewable installations, energy-efficient retrofits, or solar balconies remain prohibitive for low-income households.

In rental housing, landlords’ reluctance to invest —or regulations that allow cost transfers to tenants— further exacerbate inequality.

Many ECs also lack human and institutional capacity to design and deliver training or empowerment programs. While initiatives like SoLocal (Germany) or collaborations with the Red Cross (Spain) demonstrate effective participatory approaches, their scalability is limited by financial instability and volunteer dependence.

4.6. Data gaps and systemic fragmentation

Evidence-based decision-making is hampered by the lack of disaggregated data on energy consumption, income, housing quality, and gender. Without accurate information, ECs struggle to assess needs or monitor social impact.

At the same time, weather-dependent renewable generation, small project size, and limited storage capacity threaten the long-term sustainability of inclusive energy models.





The absence of integrated monitoring frameworks and coordination across sectors leads to duplication of efforts and prevents knowledge transfer between local initiatives.

4.7. Conclusions

While energy communities hold immense potential to advance energy justice and social inclusion, their capacity to alleviate energy poverty is still constrained by interlinked financial, administrative, technical, and social barriers.

Overcoming these challenges requires:

- Targeted public funding and subsidy schemes accessible to vulnerable groups.
- Simplified regulatory procedures and clearer energy-sharing frameworks.
- Capacity-building and training programmes to bridge literacy gaps.
- Gender-sensitive governance models ensuring fair representation.
- Strong networks for knowledge exchange and collaboration between ECs, social organisations, and municipalities.

Only through coordinated multi-level support —from local governments, national authorities, and the EU— can energy communities fully realise their potential to deliver inclusive, equitable, and sustainable access to clean energy across Europe.

5. Other citizen initiatives

Addressing energy poverty requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond the activities of formal energy communities. Across Europe, a variety of citizen-led initiatives, NGOs, municipal offices, and civil society organizations contribute to alleviating energy poverty through advisory services, education, financial support, policy advocacy, and practical interventions in housing and energy efficiency. While energy communities play a role in decentralized energy generation and local engagement, these complementary initiatives provide essential support to vulnerable households that may not yet be able to participate in community energy projects.

Many initiatives focus on low-threshold counselling and education to empower households experiencing energy poverty. In Austria, the Climate and Energy Fund's "Energiesparen und Gerätetausch" program offers tailored advice on energy-saving behaviour and appliance replacement, targeting migrants, elderly people, and single-parent families. In Germany, Energie Cafés create informal spaces for exchanging experiences and knowledge, helping households understand energy bills, rights, and energy efficiency measures. The Verbraucherzentrale





Bundesverband and the Stromspar-Check project provide financial and technical guidance alongside practical support, such as free products and energy-saving assessments. These initiatives often serve as bridges for vulnerable households to later participate in energy communities, offering an entry point for engagement and awareness.

Municipal offices and public sector programs also play a significant role. In Greece, the Athens Energy Poverty Office provides home energy audits, tax discounts, and facilitates preferential deals for energy-efficient appliances, while piloting a digital one-stop-shop to guide households through subsidies, renovations, and efficiency improvements. In Lithuania, public institutions like Circular Economy promote sustainable practices and support vulnerable groups through training, skill development, and guidance on energy-efficient lifestyles. These initiatives demonstrate how local governments and public institutions can operationalize energy poverty support, complementing civil society initiatives and energy communities.

Policy advocacy and legal frameworks are equally important. In Catalonia, the Aliança contra la Pobresa Energètica (APE) successfully campaigned for Law 24/2015, which protects vulnerable households from energy cut-offs, combining direct support, collective empowerment, and advocacy. In Germany, NGOs and tenant associations contribute research and policy recommendations to promote equitable access to energy-efficient renovations, emphasizing social justice within the energy transition. These experiences highlight the importance of integrating legal protections with grassroots action to tackle structural barriers.

Across countries, initiatives face common contextual and technical challenges, including complex regulations, fragmented responsibilities, limited financial and human resources, technical literacy gaps, and high upfront costs of energy efficiency or renewable energy projects. Vulnerable households, particularly renters, often cannot act independently to improve housing conditions, while bureaucratic procedures and delays in funding limit the effectiveness of renovation initiatives. These obstacles reduce the potential reach of both energy communities and civil society programs.

Gender and social inclusion are increasingly recognized as critical dimensions. Women, especially single mothers and elderly women, are disproportionately affected by energy poverty due to structural inequalities, caregiving responsibilities, and limited participation in technical or leadership roles. Initiatives across Europe, from Lithuania to Germany, aim to address these gaps by providing safe spaces for learning, co-creation and peer support. Ensuring anonymity and avoiding stigmatization are common principles, allowing vulnerable participants to engage on equal terms.

Collaboration between energy communities and other initiatives is emerging as a promising strategy. Non-profit and grassroots organizations can facilitate the engagement of marginalized households, provide outreach and trust-building, and guide energy communities in designing inclusive participation models. In Catalonia, the APE works with local energy communities to ensure membership is accessible without stigmatization, leveraging existing networks, knowledge, and





trust. Similarly, in Germany and Austria, energy communities participate in counselling and community events, providing practical solutions while gaining insight into the needs of vulnerable populations. Such partnerships allow energy communities to complement, rather than replace, targeted social programs.

The experiences across Austria, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Spain demonstrate that combating energy poverty effectively requires integrated approaches combining technical, social, and policy dimensions. Key elements include accessible advisory and educational services, coordination between public authorities and NGOs, legal protections, gender-sensitive and inclusive participation strategies, and collaboration between energy communities and broader civil society initiatives. By combining these elements, vulnerable households can gain practical support, empowerment, and opportunities for participation, while energy communities can extend their reach and effectiveness. Coordinated action among energy communities, NGOs, municipal authorities, and grassroots movements is essential to ensure a comprehensive and equitable response to energy poverty throughout Europe.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of energy communities (ECs) and other citizen initiatives across Austria, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia, and Spain highlights both the potential and the limitations of these actors in addressing energy poverty. Across all contexts, energy poverty is closely linked to housing quality, income, gender, age, migration status, and local energy infrastructures. Energy communities are emerging as transformative instruments, but their impact is constrained by financial, administrative, technical, social, and cultural barriers. The following conclusions and recommendations synthesize key lessons and actionable steps.

6.1. Key Conclusions

Energy communities as tools for inclusion and solidarity

- In Austria, projects like Energy WITH Spirit, SOL:E, and sozialEG demonstrate how community governance, co-creation, and tailored tariff models can redistribute energy and financial resources effectively.
- In Germany, initiatives such as Energie Cafés and Stromspar-Check provide spaces for knowledge sharing and direct energy support, complementing ECs.
- In Greece, ECs such as Hyperion, CommonEn, and Minoan Energy provide free shares or cover energy costs, but disadvantaged households remain mostly passive beneficiaries.



- Lithuanian ECs like CEC Saulelydis and Šiauliai Municipal Energy Community integrate vulnerable households successfully, while others struggle with low social inclusion.
- In Spain, ECs such as La Bordeta show how strong collaboration with municipalities and social organisations can advance fair energy access, though bureaucratic and financial barriers still limit scale and inclusion.
- In Slovenia, emerging initiatives highlight the need to embed gender equality and social justice from the outset, ensuring that future energy communities address the overrepresentation of older women among those affected by energy poverty.

Persistent barriers limit impact

- **Financial:** High upfront costs, lack of credit access, limited subsidy schemes, and the need for ethical/solidarity-based financing.
- **Administrative and regulatory:** Complex permitting processes, unclear legal frameworks, fragmented responsibilities across municipalities and national authorities.
- **Technical and educational:** Low energy literacy, digital exclusion, and lack of technical knowledge among disadvantaged groups.
- **Social and cultural:** Stigma associated with energy poverty, limited awareness of rights, and lack of trust in community initiatives.
- **Gender-specific:** Women, especially single mothers and elderly women, face lower participation, limited leadership opportunities, and time constraints due to caregiving responsibilities.

Institutional support is crucial

- Across all contexts, collaboration with municipalities, social services, NGOs, and research institutions increases the effectiveness of ECs.
- Stable policy frameworks, clear definitions of energy poverty, and accessible data on gender and social vulnerabilities are necessary for targeted interventions.
- EU funding programs (Horizon Europe, ERDF, Next Generation EU) provide vital resources to scale up community efforts and complement national measures.





Inclusivity requires proactive design

- Meaningful participation of energy-poor households is possible if ECs adopt solidarity-based financial models, anonymized participation, and flexible engagement approaches.
- Gender balance in governance and training programs enhances both fairness and community effectiveness.
- Partnerships with existing popular initiatives (e.g., APE in Catalonia, consumer associations in Lithuania) help ECs anchor in local contexts and expand outreach.

6.2. Recommendations

6.2.1. For national decision-makers

Legislative and regulatory action

- Fully transpose EU RED II/III directives to enable energy sharing and collective self-consumption.
- Establish clear legal recognition of energy-poor households and integrate them into energy sharing models.
- Simplify permitting and supplier regulations for ECs and citizen-led initiatives.

Financial support mechanisms

- Provide subsidies, revolving funds, or municipal guarantees to enable low-income households to participate without upfront costs.
- Introduce solidarity-oriented schemes (income-based shares, cooperative equity pools, guaranteed free energy).

Data and monitoring

- Mandate systematic collection and publication of gender- and intersectional-disaggregated energy poverty data.
- Develop standardized analytical tools for multidimensional identification of energy poverty, facilitating monitoring and evaluation.

Capacity building

- Support ECs in inclusive governance, gender equality, and energy literacy.
- Fund decentralized advisory structures and one-stop shops to improve accessibility for vulnerable households.





6.2.2. For energy communities

Inclusive practices

- Embed social and gender inclusion in statutes, leadership, and governance structures.
- Adopt solidarity-based tariff systems; redistribute surplus energy or revenues to vulnerable members.
- Offer gifted shares, discounted membership, or free energy access to low-income households.

Collaboration and outreach

- Cooperate with social institutions, NGOs, and local associations to reach structurally vulnerable households.
- Organize co-creation workshops, training, and community events that integrate disadvantaged groups meaningfully.

Capacity and empowerment

- Provide training on energy literacy, cooperative governance, and gender awareness.
- Assign dedicated personnel to oversee social inclusion and energy poverty activities within the EC.

6.2.3. For social institutions and NGOs

- Partner with ECs to share communication campaigns and decentralised energy projects.
- Use their networks to facilitate participation of vulnerable households, avoiding stigma.
- Support advocacy, research, and awareness raising for energy justice and gender equality.

6.2.4. For municipalities

- Collaborate with ECs to manage energy sharing and integrate local renewable energy into social schemes.
- Simplify local procedures to accelerate rooftop PV and other renewable initiatives.
- Subsidize energy efficiency measures for low-income households, including retrofitting and balcony PV installations.





- Include energy poverty and gender equality criteria in planning, procurement, and funding eligibility.
- Expand community training programs tailored to structurally vulnerable groups.

6.2.5. Cross-cutting recommendations

- Treat energy as a basic human right, prioritizing access for households in need.
- Promote participatory decision-making, valuing non-financial contributions such as time, care, and local knowledge.
- Foster networks among ECs, citizen initiatives, and grassroots movements to exchange knowledge and avoid duplicating efforts.
- Apply integrated justice frameworks linking energy, housing, mobility, and public services.
- Establish stable and predictable policy frameworks, including net-metering/net-billing rules, to scale community projects sustainably.

6.3. Final remarks

Energy communities and citizen initiatives have shown significant potential to reduce energy poverty, enhance social cohesion, and advance gender equality. Their success depends on deliberate design, inclusive governance, collaboration with public and social actors, and access to financial, technical, and regulatory support. Without these structural conditions, energy communities risk remaining primarily middle-class initiatives with limited social impact. By adopting the recommendations above, ECs can evolve into truly transformative actors, enabling a just, inclusive, and sustainable energy transition across Europe.